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182 war.

The Bedouins of al-Qasr are conscious of the practicality of external kinship ties. The role of mother's
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182 brother becomes a significant symbol for the maintenance of these ties. Boys are supposed to respect their khal ("mother's brother") in order "to avoid wars which could end the world." The Bedouins claim vehemently that "no quarrel can happen between me and a member of that tribe because my brother has married into that tribe." [181] They make the value of the mother's brother link very explicit: "Marriage into other tribes makes quarrels impossible."

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•538 There are many Bedouin proverbs pointing to the place of the mother's brother in the social structure. Proverbs, in any culture, trace out areas of behavior which have become important. Kenneth Burke (1957:256) says of proverbs, that they are "strategies for dealing with situations. In so far as situations are typical and recurrent in a given social structure, people develop names for them and strategies for handling them. Another name for strategies might be attitudes." [829] The Bedouins likewise look upon proverbs as templates for behavior. They say that "we should heed proverbs because they are the words of the elders; they are like a white flag which marks the way, and people should not go beyond these flags."

A most common proverb which elevates the mother's

604 538 brother to special place in the social structure states that [539] "two-thirds of the boy belongs to the khal, and he is like the father: the remaining one-third is divided equally between the father and the khal." The Bedouins are always quick to point out to the stranger, such as I was, that this means there is only one-sixth of the boy which belongs to the father. A clearer case of the ideology of kinship versus [539] descent could not be had. Another proverb has it that "the good which you see in a boy comes from khal khalu ("the maternal uncle of his maternal uncle"). Any kinship relation may be the basis for a new network of social relations by making use of the classificatory principle. The Bedouins [539] exaggerate the status and role of the mother's brother by saying that "when a boy does good or bad, one wants to know the name of his khal not the name of his father." This statement, which favors cognatic links over patrilineal ties, is not true but such an attempt at emphasis indicates that this relationship is something of value in the Bedouin society.

604 578 In the case of any conflict "between his tribes," the Bedouins say, "the boy must support the tribe of his khal." This, of course, does not mean that the individual should take up arms against his patrilineal corporate group, but that he should seek to mediate the conflict. The political 562 593 554 182 578 value of conflict avoidance and conflict control is also conspicuous in the dual role which the mature female plays

Cases

584 Prior to the wedding festivities, the
593 father will have participated in negotiations, although even in these he will have remained silent, leaving an affine, as a rule, to arrange the details with the girl's father and his kinsmen. The father feigns aloofness from the start of negotiations until after the wedding celebrations have ended. Before inquiring into this seemingly odd behaviour, a few further details of marriage ceremonies need to be mentioned briefly.

585 The bride is carried to the nuptial tent on a camel, seated in a cagelike
342 structure placed on the camel's back, this canopy covered over with carpets
[492] and at least one long blanket — later to be used to divide her tent into male and female quarters — which constitute part of the goods given to a woman
[788] on marriage. On her arrival, while she is still seated in her canopy, the camel is led round the tent seven times by a small boy. She then descends and is hustled into the tent by a number of women who make a show of their attempts to conceal her from view. Inside the tent the bride is enclosed in one corner in a kind of cubicle partitioned off by a length of blanket.

585 In the meantime, the groom has affected to escape, but is "caught," while
[533] running away, by his fellows, who "compel" him to return to the nuptial tent,
[831] to the accompaniment of their lewd songs telling of the sexual pleasures awaiting him. Much of this is horseplay, but the young men carry it out brazenly and the groom is required to show reluctance to continue with the ceremonies. His entry into the nuptial tent is marked by an expectant hush that falls over the crowd of men gathered, as they await the result of the virginity test the groom is about to perform, which he does by wrapping part of his toga round one of his fingers to pierce the hymen. Sharp shrieks from
[202] the bride give the signal that the test has been undertaken; not a stir moves the crowd until evidence of its success has been publicly displayed, which is given by the groom hoisting the blood-stained portion of the toga through the corner of the tent on a pole, followed by firing three shots from his rifle. Jubilantly, the men gathered fire volley after volley from their rifles just over the nuptial tent, and the seven-day celebrations begin.

585 A full descriptive account of a marriage, or many of the ritual details
589 woven into it need not be given here. What is included is intended to illus-
[593] trate certain relationships between father and son, and between one
[561] generation and another. In this connection two further points are appropriate. First, during the week of festival, young men gather outside the nuptial
[535] tent each night to encourage a maiden in her dancing, clapping their hands
[533] to the point of injury "so that we will have a wife soon." The celebrations belong to the bachelors, and they are the only ones to engage in the singing and hand clapping. It is they too who stop the bridal camel on its way to
[538] the nuptial tent to recite obscene rhymes to the bride, and they also shout
[831] their rather dubious consolations to the bride who, during the virginity test, crying out for her mother, is assured by them that the night holds promise
585 for her which her mother could never extend. The married men, particularly
602 the close senior agnates of the groom, stay away from it all, discussing mat-
521 ters unconnected with the affair.

462 424 them or any innate aptitude for them; this insistence is an index of the jealousy with which she is prepared to guard her rights. Each right derived from this or that small task is an extension of her control over the male.

462 424 252 The force and significance of this control is, perhaps, best seen in a woman's right to cook. At marriage a woman must have at least the minimum of cooking utensils, and one of the rights a man acquires in a woman is that she cooks for him. This is something a man cannot do for himself. [593] Therefore, when a man ill-treats his wife or threatens her with divorce, she can retaliate by refusing to cook, or leave the tent altogether to return to her father. A man bereft of this service is in a very sorry plight indeed. The legal dominance of the male, seemingly autocratic, is reduced at every point by the control a woman exercises through her exclusive right to perform tasks. The limits to the area of her coercive powers are significant. They are confined almost wholly to domestic relationships. Legally, women 562 suffer such disabilities that they are almost of the status of minors; in reality, their day-to-day living is far from intolerable because they are able to control males over a wide field of relationships.

462 424 231 Men, excluded in the main from domestic duties around the tent, perform tasks to which their legal rights are tied. While women have access to wells for water used by human beings, the transport of larger quantities of water over longer distances, requiring the use of camels, is a task which falls to the men. Watering of animals is done by men. Only they can slaughter the animals for food. The meat of an animal slaughtered by a woman is not "free," in a ritual sense, for human consumption. In an extremity only, a woman can, in effect, kill an animal, but the knife which cuts its throat must be held in a male hand, even if it is the hand of a very 462 small boy. The exploitation of the land is also the male prerogative. They [424] plough and sow the grain; incidental help may be provided by wives working [241] alongside their husbands during the early part of reaping, but the main reaping is done entirely by men. Transportation of grain to the mounds is also carried out by men, and it is they only who have access to the grain stores when quantities are withdrawn for family use. Sheep-shearing is [236] carried out entirely by males,[10] the fleeces are stacked by them and the [432] distribution and sales of these is directed by the male head of the tent.

Additional to these major tasks which males undertake are a number of minor ones. Men sew strips of cotton together to make clothes for both sexes. They also make rope of grass, albeit in a desultory sort of way, by twisting together the strands between the palms of the hands. A number of [834] other tasks fall to the men by virtue of the fact that the sexes are separated [342] in the tent by a divider of blanket material, which may be taken down when only members of the elementary family are about, but which is put

[461] [533] [588] [831] [10] This work is reserved for the younger men and takes the form of a festival during which lewd songs are sung and poems with obscene themes or references are recited loudly and within the hearing of elders, in a manner not dissimilar to the behaviour of bachelors at a wedding.